

To: Michigan State Senate Energy and Technology Committee
August 13, 2015

Re: Consideration of the appointment of Norman Saari to the MPSC

Recommendation to establish qualifications to serve on the Michigan Public Service Commission

MPSC's Mission

The mission of the Michigan Public Service Commission is to grow Michigan's economy and enhance the quality of life of its communities by assuring safe and reliable energy and telecommunications services at reasonable rates.

Members of the Commission

The Michigan Public Service Commission is composed of three members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Commissioners are appointed to serve staggered six-year terms. No more than two Commissioners may represent the same political party. One commissioner is designated as chairman by the Governor.

History:

Purpose: to regulate monopoly utility rates and conditions of service.

The electric transmission and distribution businesses remain under a regulated monopoly utility structure to this day, (Aug. 13, 2015) as most Michigan electric service customers have no choice in electric service providers.

Current requirements to be a Commissioner:

MPSC members were prohibited from serving as officers or committee members of any political party organization. In 1951, the Legislature passed Public Act 275, which required that not more than two Commissioners may represent a single political party.

Would it not be safe to say that to qualify as members of the commission a candidate would also need to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he/she had no interests in anything that would prejudice them against ensuring consumers' lowest rates and best possible conditions of service?

If the Public Service Commission is supposed to serve the interest of the power customers against an otherwise unbridled corporate monopoly, where in the commissioners' resumes or bios can we find their passion for consumer advocacy free from any ties to government or the power companies?

And if, as it appears, no such evidence exists, then speaking for the power monopoly customers, I recommend that the commissioners have a proven track record of consumer advocacy, free from any interests that would bring into question their ability to carry out the MPSC's mission.

To do otherwise makes a farce of the Commission...a rubber stamp for the corporate monopolies, which have and will continue to treat the power customers as cash cows corralled and awaiting milking and slaughter.

I conclude that the sitting commissioners' ability to impartially represent the power customers be reviewed for any conflict of interest and that commissioner candidate Mr. Saari not be seated due to a blatant conflict of interest in that he worked as a paid lobbyist for one of the state's corporate monopolies (Consumers Power).

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